

Thomas Jefferson Southard House  
17 Church Street  
Richmond  
Sagadahoc County  
Maine

HABS No. ME-149

HABS  
ME  
12-RICH  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ME-149

## THOMAS JEFFERSON SOUTHARD HOUSE

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2-

Location: 17 Church Street (north side between Pleasant and Front Streets), Richmond, Sagadahoc County, Maine.

Present Owner and Occupant: Saint Alexander Nevsky Foundation.

Present Use: Russian home for the aged.

Statement of Significance: One of the most stylish wooden Italianate houses surviving in Maine, designed in the manner of the Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan, and the residence of prominent Richmond shipbuilder and developer, Thomas J. Southard, from circa 1855 until his death in 1896.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. References are the offices of the Registrar of Deeds and the Registrar of Probate, Sagadahoc County, County Courthouse, Bath, Maine 04530.

1835 & 1853 Four deeds which comprise lot without building thereon:

Deed September 29, 1835 recorded January 25, 1839 in Book 14 of Western District of Lincoln County, page 549  
William Gardiner  
to  
Thomas J. Southard

Deed September 29, 1835 recorded January 25, 1839 in Book 14 of Western District of Lincoln County, page 550  
William Gardiner  
to  
Thomas J. Southard

Deed June 21, 1853 recorded July 11, 1853 in Book 40 of Western District of Lincoln County, page 328

Kennebec and Portland Railroad Company  
to  
Thomas J. Southard

Deed July 5, 1853 recorded February 10, 1854 in  
Book 42 of Western District of Lincoln County,  
page 311  
Samuel Weymouth and Benjamin Weymouth  
to  
Thomas J. Southard

Thomas J. Southard died September 15, 1896. There is no mention of the lot or the house he built upon it circa 1855 in his will or estate papers on file at the Registry of Probate, Sagadahoc County. Apparently Southard transferred the property to his wife at some point before his death, but no legal record of this has been located. Mrs. Jane J. Southard died a little more than a month later than her husband on October 20, 1896. The property appears in an inventory of her estate made on December 19, 1896, and filed at the Registry of Probate, Sagadahoc County. Referred to as "Homestead House and lot corner Church and Pleasant Streets, Richmond," it was sold by Mrs. Southard's administrators to her son, Charles H. T. J. Southard, in 1901.

1901 Deed November 26, 1901 recorded November 27,  
1901 in Book 100 page 305  
Seth L. Larrabee and Leslie C. Cornish, Adminis-  
trators of the Estate of Jane J. Southard  
to  
Charles H. T. J. Southard

Charles H. T. J. Southard died October 20, 1912, and left the "House and lot, corner of Pleasant, Church, and White Streets" to his son, Thomas J. Southard.

1913 Devise March 26, 1913 recorded March 26, 1913  
in Book 122 page 138  
Last will and testament of C. H. T. J. Southard  
probated December 3, 1912: "First I bequeath all  
my property, real and personal wheresoever the  
same may be, to my son Thomas J. Southard."

1913 Deed May 9, 1913 recorded June 7, 1913 in Book  
127 page 256  
Thomas J. Southard  
to  
Mary L. Ring

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1927 Deed November 15, 1927 recorded December 7, 1927  
in Book 168 page 40  
Mary L. Ring  
to  
Rachel C. Messenger

1953 Deed February 20, 1953 recorded February 21, 1953  
in Book 276 page 118  
Rachel C. Messenger  
to  
Saint Alexander Nevsky Foundation

2. Date of erection: Built circa 1855. Southard purchased the lots which comprise the site in 1835 and 1853. A lithographic view of the house appears on Map of the Town of Richmond, Sagadahoc Co., Maine from actual survey by D. S. Osborn, Civil Engineer, published by E. M. Woodford, Philadelphia, 1855. Entrance gate of cast iron fence is dated 1855.
3. Architect, builder, suppliers, etc.: Unknown. Consideration should be given to the fact that in his youth, Thomas J. Southard spent a year learning the trade of ship joiner and six months studying drafting. In 1882 he designed the Southard Block at 25 Front Street, Richmond, with the assistance of Thomas M. Rollins, an Augusta carpenter. Whether Southard was the architect of his own house or whether he obtained a set of plans or help from another source is unresolved.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None known.
5. Alterations and additions: Wooden finial of the cupola has been removed; the two carved wooden pillars of the portico, which were similar in design to the two ornamental pilasters behind them, have been replaced by plain, square, matched boarded pillars; the porch which extended along the west side of the house below the first story windows has been removed, but its wooden canopy over those windows survives.
6. Important old views: Lithographic view appearing on Map of the Town of Richmond, Sagadahoc Co., Maine from actual survey by D. S. Osborn, Civil Engineer, published by E. M. Woodford, Philadelphia, 1855. Map in possession of Mrs. Paul L. Roberts, Pleasant St., Richmond, Maine 04357. Photograph looking down Church Street from Pleasant Street with Thomas J. Southard House at left, taken in spring of 1890 by A. B. Houdlette. Photograph in possession of Mrs. Earl Cronk, 55 Main St., Richmond, Maine 04357.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Residence of prominent Richmond shipbuilder and developer, Thomas Jefferson Southard, from circa 1855 until his death in 1896.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Sagadahoc County Registry of Deeds and Registry of Probate, Sagadahoc County Courthouse, High Street, Bath, Maine 04530. Interview (1971) with Mrs. Paul Roberts, 32 Pleasant Street, Richmond, Maine 04357.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Fleming, John Daly (ed.). Richmond on the Kennebec. Lewiston: Twin City Printery, 1966.

"From Anvil to Riches," a biographical sketch of Thomas J. Southard, Boston Herald (Monday, November 18, 1889, page 8).

Sloan, Samuel. The Model Architect. Volumes I and II. Philadelphia: E. G. Jones & Co., 1852.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Thomas J. Southard House, built circa 1855, is a stylish wooden Italianate dwelling. It reflects the manner of the Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan in its heavily bracketed cupola with broadly overhanging eaves and in its canopy along the west side. The house is two stories high, approximately rectangular, has a hipped roof with a tall cupola, and has a one-and-a-half story rectangular ell attached to its east wall.

2. Condition of fabric: Some alteration, well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: House, 43'-7" x 34', approximately rectangular, two stories, three-bay facade; ell attached at east side, 28' x 18'-10", approximately rectangular, story-and-a-half, two-bay facade; enclosed porch in front of ell, 26'-11" x 7'-7", approximately rectangular, one story, six-bay facade.

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2. Foundations: Granite.
3. Wall construction: Yellow clapboarding with yellow and white trim, pilasters of white, vertical matched boarding at corners.
4. Framing: Standard light frame construction with wooden studs, joists and rafters.
5. Porches: The front (south) portico has granite steps and a granite base. It is made of wood and is comprised of two thick pilasters with decorative foliage near their bases and two square pillars which are replacements for ones similar to the pilasters. The pilasters and pillars support a large front arch and two smaller side ones, above which are a flat roof and a balustrade. On either side of the arches are thin, elongated consoles, while large ornamental keystones are found in the center of the side arches. Below each of the two second story side windows of the front (south wall) is a small balcony. It is supported by two large ornate brackets and has a flat rectangular floor which is surrounded on three sides by a balustrade. A porch originally extended along the west side of the house below the first story windows. It has been removed, but its wooden canopy over these windows survives. The design of this canopy is similar to one shown in Design VI, Plate XXIV, Volume I, of The Model Architect by Samuel Sloan, Philadelphia, 1852.
6. Chimneys: The main house possesses a thin, rectangular brick chimney on either side of the cupola. These are shorter than the cupola itself. They have an east-west orientation and are placed halfway through the house. The ell has a similar thin rectangular brick chimney which is much taller than those on the house. It is also east-west in orientation, but is situated slightly north of the ridge in the ell's gable roof.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The wooden main (south) door has an arched top and elaborate paneling. It is surrounded by side and over lights, which are painted with scenes commemorating the life of Thomas J. Southard's daughter, Delia Tallman, who was lost at sea in 1851. The ell has a simple wooden door in the recess of the fourth bay from the left on the front (south). There is also a plain wooden door in the foundation of the east side of the ell.

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- b. Windows and shutters: Windows on the main house are mostly the same size, but shutter arrangement is inconsistent. All windows display some form of Italianate molding. On the front (south side) of the first floor, there is a window on either side of the doorway. On the second story, there is a double arched window with an arched molding above it and a single window on either side. The west side has three large windows on each story, while the north side has four. The first story north windows are capped with wooden triangular pediments. The east side of the second story possesses only one large window, because of the ell. The cupola has three small elongated arched windows on each of its four sides. Windows on the ell vary in size. On the front (south side) the first three leftward bays of the enclosed one-story porch are large windows. The south side of the ell's half story has two small windows with shutters. The east side of the ell possesses a large window in the foundation and a small one in the half story, both without shutters. The back or north wall of the ell has two large first story windows without shutters and one small half story window with them.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Main house, hip roof covered with tin sheeting; ell, gable roof with ridge running east-west, covered with tin sheeting.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves of the main house have a pronounced overhang. The cornice is ornamented with pairs of large carved brackets. There are six pairs on the south side, five on the west, six on the north, and four on the east. Between the brackets are many smaller rectangular wooden dentils. The eaves of three ell walls have less of an overhang than those of the main house. The cornice on the north and south sides has a series of small wooden brackets, while the east side briefly continues the series of brackets and uses small rectangular dentils in its gable.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: A square wooden cupola is at the center of the hipped roof of the main house. Each wall has a group of three small elongated arched windows with a pair of large elaborately carved brackets on either side. The cupola roof is flat with an emphatic overhang. A wooden finial formerly stood at the center of this roof. The

cupola design is similar to one shown in Design XLIV, Plates XLVII and L, Volume II, of The Model Architect by Samuel Sloan, Philadelphia, 1852.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Full basement extends under main house and ell.
- b. First floor: Central hallway with southeast room and southwest room on either side. Hallway leads to library in northwest corner and to arched open entryway. Beyond entryway to the right is stairway. Entryway passes into back hallway which leads to northeast room. In this room another doorway leads to ell, where there are two rooms.
- c. Second floor: Stairway leads to hall in center of house. Off this hall are rooms in the southeast corner, the middle of the south side, the southwest corner, and the northwest corner. The middle of the east section is devoted to a hallway into the ell and its rooms. The northeast portion of the main house has the stairway which leads to the cupola.
- d. Attic: A low open space entered at a landing on the way to the cupola.
- e. Cupola: A small square room with staircase entering from the center of the floor.

2. Stairways: Basement stairs under main staircase. Main staircase to the right beyond entryway at end of central hallway. Staircase ascends to second story in a semi-circular manner with two niches for statuary on right side wall. Staircase to third story starts from off second story hallway, ascends halfway, changes to opposite direction at a landing, and then continues to the cupola.
3. Flooring: Medium-sized floor boards, varnished.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster and wallpaper.
5. Doorways and doors: The first floor central hallway has the most ornate doorways in the house. The arched front door is surrounded by side and over lights which are painted with scenes concerning Southard's daughter



Delia Tallman. Each of the two front parlors as well as the library is entered by a doorway encompassed by heavy Italianate moldings and topped with a keystone. Doorway treatment within the library is similar. However, the remainder of the house is done with simpler Greek Revival doorways and doors.

6. Decorative features and trim: Besides the doorways in the central hallway discussed above, there are several other important decorative features. The hallway has a thick plaster cornice, the middle of which is an intricate geometric design with a shallow background. The two front parlors and the library each have a carved white marble fireplace mantelpiece. The library, which may have been a formal parlor, is the most ornate room in the house. The woodwork has thick, heavy moldings. On the walls is an early, if not original, paper in a good state of preservation. It features silver classical figures and birds set against florid designs in tones of blue, brown, and gold. The thick plaster cornice is divided into several parts, a grouping of horizontal moldings, a band of swirling foliage with a hollow background, another group of horizontal moldings, and a final band with a small repeating foliage motif. At the center of the ceiling is a large plaster ornament from which hangs a metal gas chandelier which has been electrified.
7. Notable hardware: None.
8. Lighting: Modern electrical fixtures except in library, where original metal gas chandelier has been electrified.
9. Heating: Seven major rooms have fireplaces. Present heating system consists of oil-fired steam radiators.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Southard House is on a slightly raised lot and faces south toward Church Street in a residential neighborhood. To the east is Saint Alexander Nevsky Church, while to the west are Pleasant Street and railroad tracks.
2. Enclosures: The lot is partially enclosed on the south and fully enclosed on the west by an original cast iron fence which has become overgrown by a hedge. Its entrance gate bears the date 1855. The northern and eastern boundaries of the lot as well as part of the southern one are enclosed by a more recent chain link fence.

3. Outbuildings: Saint Alexander Nevsky Church to the east of the house was originally Thomas J. Southard's barn. HABS  
It is a rectangular structure with a gable roof which ME  
has been completely remodelled to adapt it for church 12-RICH  
use. The 1890 photograph of the house shows a small 2-  
one story rectangular structure with a gable roof on  
the southwestern corner of the lot. Its origin, purpose,  
and date of removal are uncertain.
4. Walks: Cement walk leading from the sidewalk to the  
granite front steps of the house; cement walk leading  
from the sidewalk to granite steps of the ell entrance;  
cement walk from the ell entrance steps to the church  
entrance.
5. Landscaping: A few random bushes around the house and  
ell; a grass lawn surrounding the house; a hedge on the  
south and west sides of the lot; large trees on the  
southern boundary of the property.

Prepared by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr.  
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